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Fan, Chengda, translated by James M. Hargett. *Treatises of the Supervisor and Guardian of the Cinnamon Sea: The Natural World and Material Culture of Twelfth-Century China*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010. lxvi + 349 pp., ISBN 978-0-295-99079-8.

There is a rather large body of extant texts dating from premodern China often collectively referred to as “travel records” (*youji* 遊記). Although not a typical “travel record”, such as a day-trip essay or an embassy report, Fan Chengda’s 范成大 (1126–1193) *Treatises of the Supervisor and Guardian of the Cinnamon Sea* (*Guihai yuheng zhi* 桂海虞衡志; hereafter *Treatises*) shares much in common with other works of the genre, in particular as it comprises both passages outlining the landmarks, vegetation, and people of particular localities, and reportorial accounts on those areas’ customs and products. It is well known that Chinese “travel records” are extremely valuable as source works, mainly because they often contain detailed descriptions and lists of information – usually related to geographical and mythological matters – which are not found elsewhere. In this regard, the *Treatises* is no exception. In fact, it stands as the earliest extant and most detailed written record on China’s southwestern frontier. Comprised of 13 sections, each devoted to a particular category of objects, the book offers a wealth of geographical, historical, cultural, and ethnographical data about southwestern China – mainly Guangxi – in the twelfth century, ranging from landscape, minerals, flora and fauna to the history of various non-Han peoples and their cultures.

To most scholars whose research interests center around the Song 宋 dynasty (960–1279) in China, the *Treatises* is not a closed book. But with James M. Hargett’s meticulous yet lucid translation of the text, indeed the first completed and annotated translation published in any language, it is now doubtlessly accessible to a much broader readership. Professor Hargett has already established himself as a leading scholar in the fledgling field of studies in Chinese travel literature, and many of his publications deal with Fan Chengda, a renowned official and literatus of the Song. Together with his annotated translations of *Diary of Grasping the Carriage Reins* (*Lanpei lu* 攬轡錄), *Diary of Mounting a Simurgh* (*Canluan lu* 驂鸞錄), and *Diary of a Boat Trip to Wu* (*Wuchuan lu* 吳船錄), Hargett’s initial aim

to provide English readers with translations of all four of Fan's major prose works has now been accomplished.¹

In addition to a complete annotated translation of Fan's original text, which makes up the predominant part of the book, Hargett also provides a substantial, comprehensive scholarly introduction that helps the reader to situate the *Treatises* in its historical and cultural context. In this introduction, three points are particularly important for our understanding of Fan's work. First, the methodological approach and contents of the *Treatises* show that it is not a conventional "travel record" but at once a gazetteer, an encyclopedia, and an ethnography. A copious amount of information on local conditions (as common in gazetteers) is organized into topical categories (as in encyclopedias), including an extensive one on "foreign peoples" which Fan collectively termed as *man* 蠻 (lit. barbarians) (typical for ethnographic texts). However, the relative lack of references to quotations and lore from literary tradition and Fan's clear notion that it was compiled for private rather than political-administrative purposes make it evident that the *Treatise* hardly resembles any of these three genres. Ultimately, Hargett concludes that it may be best to classify it as "a 'miscellany' or an example of Song dynasty *biji* [筆記, sometimes also translated as note literature] writing" (p. xxxix).

Second, the *Treatises* is not only "a personal memoir of Fan's happy and restful days in Guilin [in Guangxi]", but also "a serious and detailed scholarly study" which like many other "travel records" is extremely valuable as a source work (p. xxxvi). Fan was an experienced traveler as well as a keen observer, interested in reporting on local customs and affairs. He also distinguished between what he had seen or verified personally and what he had obtained indirectly from informants. Fan endeavored to report information and to relate these facts to potential readers who probably knew little or nothing about these matters. In doing so, he adopted a strict approach of only selecting those materials that are "not generally found in local gazetteers" (p. 4). For instance, in the introduction to the "Treatise on Flowers", Fan commented that he described "only those uniquely suited to local conditions [of Guangxi]" and that "none of those found in Northern Counties [other parts of China] will be noted" (pp. 89–90). Furthermore, unlike most of Tang 唐 (618–907) and Song officials who were sent to Guangxi for demotion or political exile, Fan did not harbor much fear or distress but was surprisingly enthusiastic about his assignment. His affection for Guilin and Guangxi is evidently

¹ Translations of the first two diaries are included in Hargett 1989, while the translation of the third is presented, along with an excellent study, in Hargett 2008. Hargett's most recent work on Fan and his literary production is a complete translation of Fan's *Treatise on Mei-Flowers* (*Meipu* 梅譜) in Hargett 2010.

to be felt, as he expressed in the preface of the *Treatise* that during his time in Guilin he “found peace of mind there” (p. 3), and even after his tenure there, he still “remain[ed] deeply attached to Guilin, so much that [he has] compiled and edited this [collection] of minutia and trivia” (p. 4). The rigorous selectivity of materials and the neutral attitude of Fan towards his objects together make up for the exceptional value of the *Treatises*.

Third, and most important for a historian on Chinese border and ethnography like myself, Hargett also offers an insightful account on the expansion of the Han-Chinese and their conquest of the region of Guangxi, beginning with the Qin 秦 (221–207 B.C.) and Han 漢 (206 B.C.–220 A.D.) dynasties and extending to the Tang and Song. Hargett reveals how the Song endeavored to “maximize its control” in the southwestern border regions of the empire while “minimizing military conflict” with the large population of non-Han tribes-peoples residing there (p. xx). In contrast to the “standard” version of Chinese expansion in the history, according to which the Han-Chinese culture dominated, both militarily and politically, and the border people were either “marginalized” or “sinicized”, the *Treatises* tells a different story of the situation in the Song. The Song followed the practice of “loose rein”, known as “bridle and halter” (*jimi* 羈縻), to organize submissive tribal peoples (or peoples at least willing to submit themselves to the Chinese sovereign) into the Chinese administrative hierarchy, usually headed by local chieftains. These tribes-peoples were considered by the Han-Chinese as partially “sinicized”, yet more often than not their subordination existed only in name, as the chieftains still had near-absolute control over land distribution and tax collection within their jurisdictions. Thus when Fan Chengda arrived in Guangxi in 1173, he must have found himself in “a strange, alien land” (p. xxix) which was overwhelmingly populated by non-Han peoples who had not been assimilated into the orbit of Han-Chinese civilization. But Fan documented that he “refrained from ‘looking down on the [local] people’”, most of them probably non-Han, and “they in turn forgave my ignorance and trusted in my sincerity” (p. 3). One may surmise that this was not the case for most of Fan’s contemporaries.

The original text by Fan is not voluminous at all and it is written, as Hargett expounds, in a straightforward “reportorial-descriptive” language (p. xlv). But thoroughly understanding, translating and annotating such a text requires a considerable amount of philological spadework. This is not only due to the sheer amount of topics the *Treatises* covers, but also because many of the technical terms, geographical names and local expressions that spread all over the text are usually not to be found in the standard dictionaries, encyclopedias and reference sources. But as a master of middle period classical Chinese, Hargett accomplished a truly admirable feat in meeting this daunting task by providing a felicitous and readable translation, buttressed with extensive annotations on the highly techni-

cal and descriptive terms. The reader will marvel at Hargett's erudition, since over 1100 footnotes, 409 of them alone in the last section, draw on an impressive array of both primary and secondary sources. Carefully chosen photos and illustrations provide visual references to the text. The University of Washington Press also deserves special commendation for its editing effort to produce an elegantly formatted and easy-to-use book: all footnotes are conveniently given at the bottom of each page; a complete version of the Chinese text is appended to the translation; an extensive glossary/index with original Chinese characters facilitates quick checking of terms.

This is an impressive book, despite occasional minor quibbles (e.g. on p. xxx, Fan was in fact dispatched in 1170 as a diplomatic envoy to the Zhongdu 中都 of the Jin 金 [1115–1234], not Dadu 大都, which only became the name of the principle capital of the Yuan 元 [1271–1368] a century later; on p. 163, Fan's original sentence which means "many settlement chieftains [...] purchased official ranks [from the Song], but [they got] only military ranks ranging from 9b to 8a" is erroneously translated as "they receive corn allowances and office appointments but only at the rank of senior or junior envoy"). James M. Hargett's conscientious translation and meticulous study of Fan Chengda's *Treatises of the Supervisor and Guardian of the Cinnamon Sea* represents the culmination of a labor of devotion and love. The book does a great service to enhance our knowledge and understanding of the natural world, material culture, and ethnography in China's southwestern frontier in the twelfth century. Such an indispensable book will definitely stimulate future researchers.

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